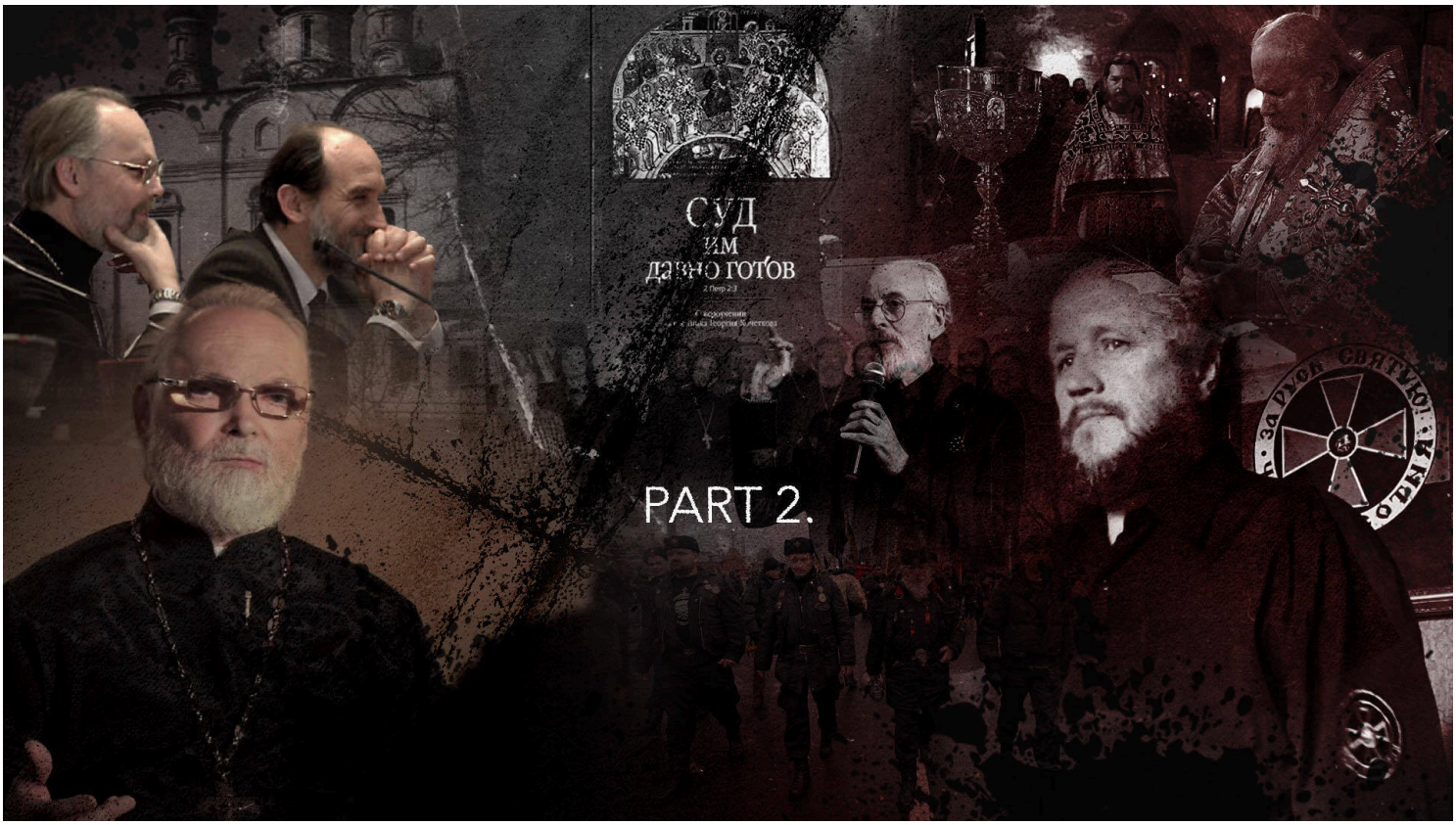


ARTICLES

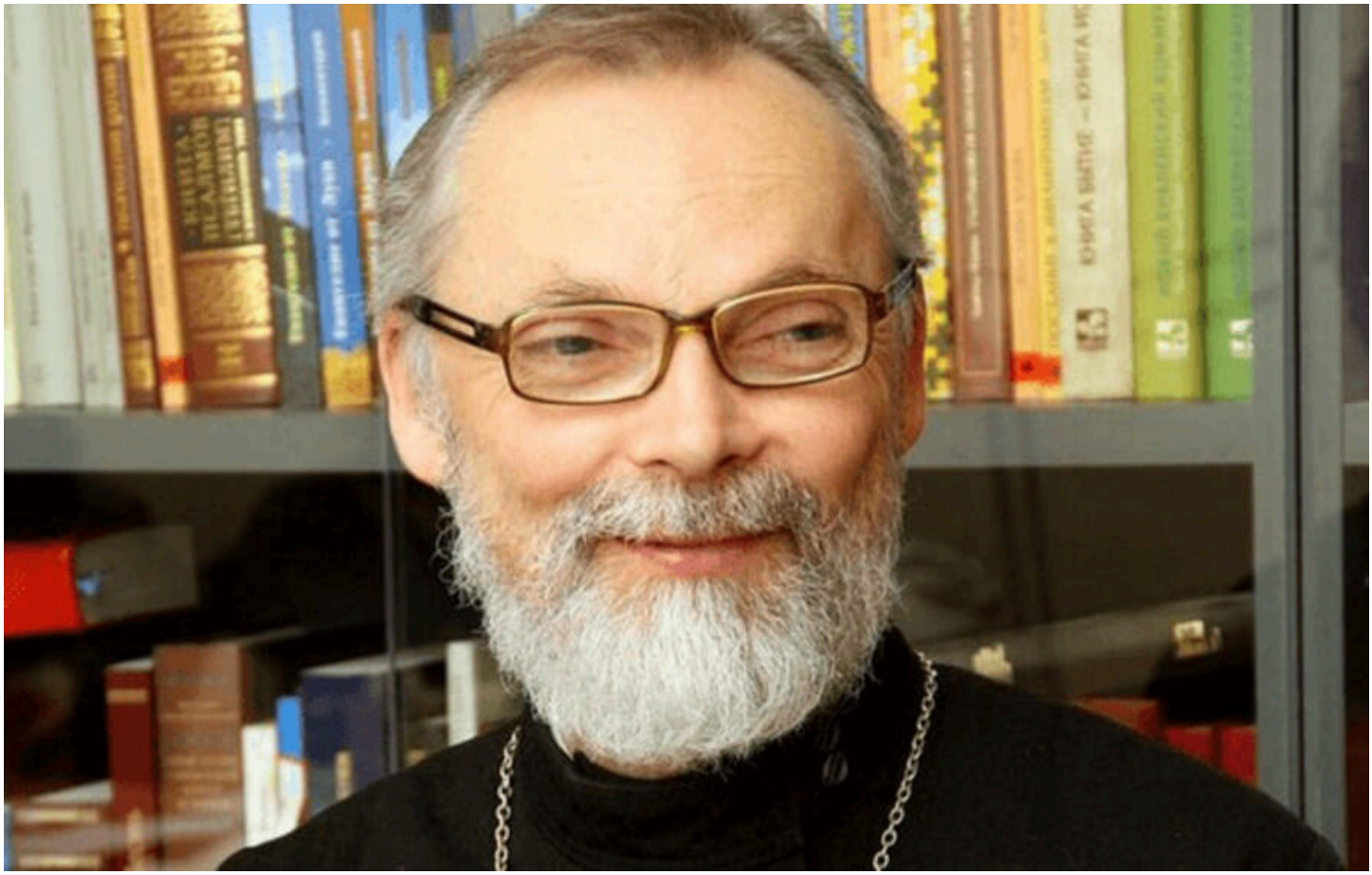
Modern Inquisition Within the Russian Orthodox Church. Part 2

February 26, 2025 · 30 mins read

“The vagueness of the terms ‘totalitarian sect’ and ‘destructive cult’ makes it possible to classify almost any religious formation, religious or philosophical teaching, cultural, educational or recreational institution as such association. If there’s a will, the concepts of ‘totalitarian sect’ and ‘destructive cult’ are always ready to embrace anyone who needs to be stigmatized without bothering to think about the consequences of thoughtlessly using such horror labels,” — Doctor of Philosophy, Professor of Lomonosov Moscow State University, Igor Kanterov.

In the first part of the article "Modern Inquisition Within the Russian Orthodox Church," we discussed how an inquisitorial apparatus was formed in Russia after the collapse of the USSR. Dvorkin's tandem with the Orthodox fundamentalists who came to power was actually fatal for the country. Millions of people with crippled destinies, who have fallen under the steamroller of Dvorkin's repressive machine, are not just the so-called "cultists" and "sectarians." Any dissent that poses a threat to Dvorkin's totalitarian rule, including dissent within the church itself, is severely punished by the loyal "dogs" of Dvorkin's totalitarian regime. In this part, we will talk about those priests who have faced persecution from the ROC's inquisitorial apparatus.

Transfiguration Brotherhood of Father Georgy Kochetkov



Priest Georgy Kochetkov (photo sourced from https://www.ogkochetkov.ru/)

"*An enlightened church is a mighty church. In my opinion, our church is very weak now, largely because it is not enlightened*," — Priest Georgy Kochetkov

Georgy Kochetkov is a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, founder and first rector of St. Philaret's Institute (SFI); theologian, translator of Orthodox Christian liturgical texts into Russian; missionary, founder, and spiritual trustee of the Transfiguration Brotherhood. He's been a priest since 1989.

Back in the 1970s, when Georgy Kochetkov was a layman, he began to develop his own system of helping people prepare for joining the Church. He defended the need to develop community life and advocated the establishment and development of Orthodox brotherhoods which he started creating jointly with his supporters.

It is noteworthy that Orthodox brotherhoods were popular even back in the Russian Empire. However, with the advent of Soviet authorities, such a phenomenon as brotherhoods was eliminated.

The first "Transfiguration Council", 1990 (Anatoly Mozgov / E. Chernykh. Original work)

The Transfiguration Brotherhood is a religious association of Orthodox Christians, founded in the late 1980s in Russia. Brotherhoods have been opened in 30 cities of Russia and abroad. The main declared goal is to ensure spiritual revival of society, support for missionary activities, and renewal of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Statements from the Transfiguration Brotherhood's website:

"*The Transfiguration Brotherhood (Fellowship of Minor Orthodox Brotherhoods) incorporates several dozen minor brotherhoods in Moscow, across Russia and abroad. Each minor brotherhood consists of communities and groups. They bring together people from different age groups as well as professional, social and educational backgrounds, who wish to serve God and the church on a shared Christian journey.*
...This is not a withdrawal from the world, but an effort to align every aspect of our lives with the Gospel, the effort to be Christian at all times and everywhere — at church, in our families, at work and within our lives in society — and the effort to affirm the possibility of living a life of faith under any and all circumstances.
Brotherhood communities come together for Bible studies and prayer meetings held at home, where they may also discuss pressing church and personal matters. Members of the Brotherhood share Eucharistic worship and agape meals (prayerful meals of love and thanksgiving)." [1]

Priest Georgy Kochetkov is the creator of a unique system of long-term catechization, i.e. textbooks and lessons for adults to join the Orthodox Christian church tradition, prayers, and life. He is the author of books and articles on missiology, catechetics, ecclesiology, anthropology, and contemporary issues of church life.

For more than 30 years, Father Georgy has been translating liturgical texts into Russian. As of today, the main block of Orthodox divine service texts, which had been written in Greek or Old Slavonic and were not subject to translation, has been translated into Russian.

In 1988, Kochetkov founded the St. Philaret's Institute (SFI). In Soviet times, the institute operated unofficially. As an independent educational institution, it was officially registered in 1992.

Georgy Kochetkov's activities began to face sharp criticism starting in 1993. In a recent interview, he described this period as follows:

Priest Georgy Kochetkov: interview, 2020

"*Sheer obscurantism, such fundamentalism, has, unfortunately, taken deep root and grown stronger over the recent decades. This wasn't the case in the late Soviet period. Sentiments in the church were completely different. I don't know where it all came from.*"

"*...after October 1993, something changed 'in the air,' so to say, in our country. Apparently, this influenced the opinion of Patriarch Alexy II, because at first he reacted calmly to everything that was happening, but then suddenly a strange word*

appeared, which for some reason they decided to apply to us, totally inappropriately; it is 'Renovationism.'" [2]

Kochetkov's main opponents were sectologist Alexander Dvorkin, archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, editor-in-chief of Radio Radonezh, Evgeny Nikiforov, as well as a number of publicists united around the "Blagodatny Ogon" ("Holy Fire") journal. They criticized Kochetkov for conducting church service in Russian, for the practice of weekly of weekly Communion and agape meals.

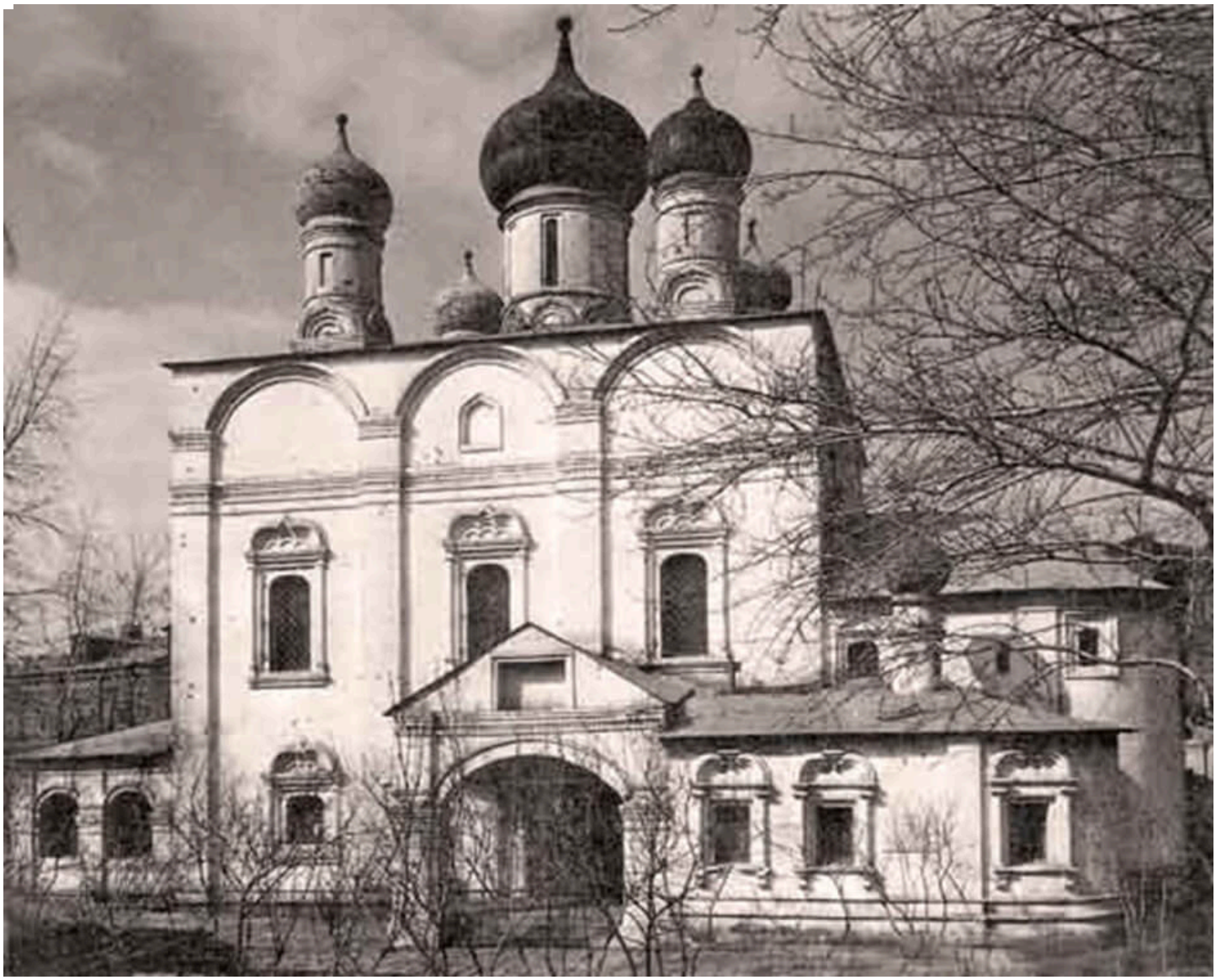
Agape Meal. Fresco from the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter, 4th century AD (photo sourced from https://azbyka.ru/)

Agape (Greek: ἀγάπη [agápē]). The Greek word ἀγάπη means "love" — the primary Christian virtue. In liturgical and historical literature, the term "Agape" refers to the communal meal of early Christians, also known as the "love feast." Agape meals were also held by Christians in remembrance of the Last Supper. [3]

Critics also found heretical views in his theological writings.

Here's how Georgy Kochetkov explains the persecution against him:

"*The thing is, during the entire Soviet period, there was a very strong ideological task for the Soviet authorities — to fulfill Lenin's Testament and prevent the spread of enlightened fideism, as Vladimir Ilyich put it.* ***Enlightened fideism, meaning an enlightened believer, was far more frightening to Lenin than an ignorant old woman****, as he himself wrote, and Soviet authorities strictly adhered to his directive. Everything related to enlightenment, reason, communication, the academic world, the world of arts, culture, and so on, was suppressed before anything else. This was especially the case after 1943, when the relationship between the Church and the state somewhat changed. In our country, the use of Russian language in church service was considered a severe form of dissent, particularly by many secular authorities. Then, out of inertia, church hierarchs who wanted to please the authorities gained the same attitude. I remember from my own experience and from many stories how, oftentimes, clergymen who started using Russian at least a little bit during services — just to make something understandable for people, at least the main concept and ideas, not even details — were suppressed because it was considered dangerous. It was dissent for which they were reprimanded and dismissed from their parishes*." [4]



Cathedral of Presentation of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God (photo sourced from ogkochetkov.ru)

In the early 1990s, the process of returning churches that had been taken during the Soviet era began. The Transfiguration Brotherhood was among the first to open and take responsibility for four churches in Moscow. In 1990, Father Georgy was appointed the rector of one of them — Cathedral of Presentation of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God at the former Sretensky Monastery, and a year later, he took on another one — Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pechatniki. Brotherhood institutions began to operate in the parish premises of the Cathedral of Presentation: St. Philaret's Institute, a catechetical school, a library, an icon-painting workshop, a Sunday school, and a kindergarten.

On December 20, 1993, at the diocesan assembly in Moscow, Patriarch Alexy II used the term "**neo-renovationism**" in reference to "one of the Moscow parishes calling itself missionary." This label was picked up, triggering a bullying campaign against Father Georgy, his parish, and the Transfiguration Brotherhood. People came to the Cathedral of Presentation with threats and demands to vacate the premises.

In January 1994, the nationalist newspaper "Russkiy Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") featured a whole collection of articles under the heading "Conspiracy," containing gross defamatory accusations against Father Georgy and the Brotherhood. The newspaper was distributed, photocopied, and posted in Moscow and other cities. Soon after, direct threats of violent actions against Father Georgy and his parishioners followed: they were promised riots, mobilization of crowds of people ("Tomorrow the Cossacks will come…"), and physical assaults. Effectively, the large parish of the Cathedral of Presentation was thus being "reduced" by the ROC hierarchy using the same methods as those employed by the NKVD during the Soviet era.

On February 14, 1994, Alexander Shtilmark, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper "Chyornaya Sotnya" ("Black Hundred"), called for an action on the Candlemas day: **to expel the "Judaizing" rector Georgy Kochetkov from the Cathedral of Presentation**.

Leader of the Black Hundred movement, Alexander Shtilmark (photo sourced from rusbas.org)

The Black Hundred is a radical nationalist and patriotic Orthodox fundamentalist organization with a distinctly monarchist orientation, formed in June 1992. It publishes a newspaper under the same name. It focuses heavily on the so-called "ritual murders," blaming Jews for these crimes. Its leader is Alexander Shtilmark. [5]

In Saint Petersburg, representatives from Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok adopted a manifesto of the new Black Hundred movement — the Union of Archangel Michael. September 12, 2019 (photo sourced from vk.com)

The Black Hundred's activities against participants of new religious movements were aggressive and hooliganistic in nature. These radical activists carried out unauthorized raids, where groups of 10 to 15 people would attack literature distributors, scatter materials, and confiscate books and tapes. [6] Their actions were sudden, yet those attacks were generally met with little resistance, which only underscored their intimidation tactics.

On the Candlemas day, a joint liturgy was held at the Cathedral of Presentation with hieromonk Tikhon Shevkunov, "supported" by a crowd of intoxicated individuals with military bearing, Black Hundred members, and Cossacks.

Members of the Transfiguration Brotherhood, witnesses of those events, recall:

"*Shevkunov came to us seemingly in peace. In a quiet, sympathetic voice, he apologized: 'I understand that you restored the Cathedral of Presentation yourselves, but there's nothing to be done; it's the order of His Holiness'...*"' [5]

Father Tikhon then added:

"*If you do not leave, we will hold our service in the monastery courtyard. And the next day, we will hold it in the courtyard again.* ***On the third day, the Cossacks will come...***" [5]

Indeed, on the third day — the Candlemas day — Cossacks led by the ataman of the Moscow Outpost of the Orenburg Cossacks, Vyacheslav Dyomin, arrived at the Sretensky Monastery. Dyomin, a former criminal, became an activist of the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods in the early 1990s, through which he propagated the idea of ritual sacrifices by the Jews.

Here's how it looked through the eyes of another member of the Transfiguration Brotherhood, Alla Vasilevskaya:

"*And so, it was the Candlemas Day. During the joint service with Father Tikhon, I was [...] in Father Georgy's office, from where I could see the courtyard and the street. My God! I couldn't believe my eyes. In the church, the service was ongoing, and among our women, children, and youth, there were many unfamiliar men with military posture and stern looks. Someone was whispering, 'Where are the enemies? I don't see any enemies.' Our parishioners replied, 'And you won't see them.' Meanwhile, in the courtyard, young muscular men were stretching — mercenaries? On the street, cars were lined up in two rows, with a white Mercedes standing out. Young men were milling around the cars, smoking, standing in groups, and strolling. I could clearly see their faces and uniforms: there were Kornilovites, Cossacks, and a man with some emblem with bones and a skull, but his uniform wasn't black. Lord! What kind of parade is this? Some were drunk. [...] The parishioners among those 'reserves' heard words like: 'Don't touch them here, but beat them out of sight of the church.*"' [7]

Cossack organizations traditionally play a significant role in forceful actions, and Orthodox nationalists actively incited them:

"'*Totalitarian sects' and 'false prophets' operate freely on Russian soil... Who will protect the Orthodox spirit of Russia and cleanse our land of the preachers of Antichrist?... Let's together cleanse our land of filth!* ***The ROD is already acting; the matter is in your hands, Cossacks — Warriors of Christ!***" [6]

This wasn't the last instance of intimidation against Father Georgy Kochetkov and his Transfiguration Brotherhood, as well as other organizations deemed undesirable by the Russian Orthodox Church. Ultimately, the Transfiguration Brotherhood was expelled from the Cathedral of Presentation.

Such forceful actions on seizing the cathedral premises were organized by igumen Tikhon Shevkunov. He is by no means a minor figure within the Inquisition. It is worth noting that this cathedral is located in close proximity to the KGB building on Lubyanka. Incidentally, Tikhon Shevkunov would later become the spiritual advisor to Vladimir Putin.

Sretensky Monastery. Bishop Tikhon Shevkunov is closer to President Vladimir Putin than Patriarch Kirill (photo sourced from kremlin.ru)

Vladimir Putin and bishop Tikhon Shevkunov (photos sourced from kremlin.ru)

Vladimir Putin and bishop Tikhon Shevkunov (photos sourced from kremlin.ru)

Conference “Unity of the Church”

In November 1994, a conference titled “Unity of the Church” was organized. Initially, the conference was intended to unite the church, and all its participants were to prepare and deliver reports. Father Georgy Kochetkov also contributed. However, it turned out that the sole purpose of the event was to condemn two priests, the leaders of the largest and most active parishes in Moscow — Father Georgy Kochetkov and Father Alexander Borisov. Out of 33 announced reports, 19 were directly focused on the activities of Father Georgy. [7]

The conference was organized by the St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Institute (PSTBI); the speakers were Alexander Dvorkin, archpriest Valentin Asmus, archpriest Artemy Vladimirov, archpriest Vladislav Sveshnikov, archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, priest Arkady Shatov, and others. **This provocation was staged two weeks before the Bishop Council (1994)** to which the organizers sent a petition demanding the dismissal of Father Alexander and Father Georgy from priesthood. The ROC episcopate did not respond with a formal reaction to the slander that had been voiced, which untied the hands of fundamentalists.

Presidium of the "Unity of the Church" conference, Danilov Monastery, November 15-16, 1994, from left to right: bishop Ioann (Popov), bishop Konstantin (Goryanov), Father Vladimir Vorobyov, bishop Evlogy (Smirnov), bishop Vasily (Rodzyanko), bishop Korniliy (Jakobs). (photo sourced from dvagrada.ru)

Alekandr Mikhailovich Kopirovsky, a Soviet and Russian art historian, candidate of pedagogical sciences, professor, and rector of St. Philaret's Institute (SFI), shared his memories of participating in the conference:

"*The conference title 'Unity of the Church' seemed terrifyingly ambiguous. Contrary to the words of Father Sergey Bulgakov, A. V. Kartashev, and others that unity is impossible without diversity, the conference organizers intended to create a model of totalitarian uniformity and, by all means, adopt a resolution condemning the practices and texts of Father Alexander Borisov and Father Georgy Kochetkov. All of that was prepared in advance, and even the text of such a resolution was drafted*

beforehand, which Father Vladimir Vorobyov [rector of PSTBI], in his simplicity, revealed to the entire audience. When he read the basis of the resolution, I said, 'But it's already printed!' He replied, 'Well, sure, how can it be otherwise?' The discussion was essentially a formality; the main goal was to condemn and push through the resolution as the conference outcome." [8]

Alexander Kopirovsky and Father Georgy Kochetkov (photos sourced from antimodern.ru)

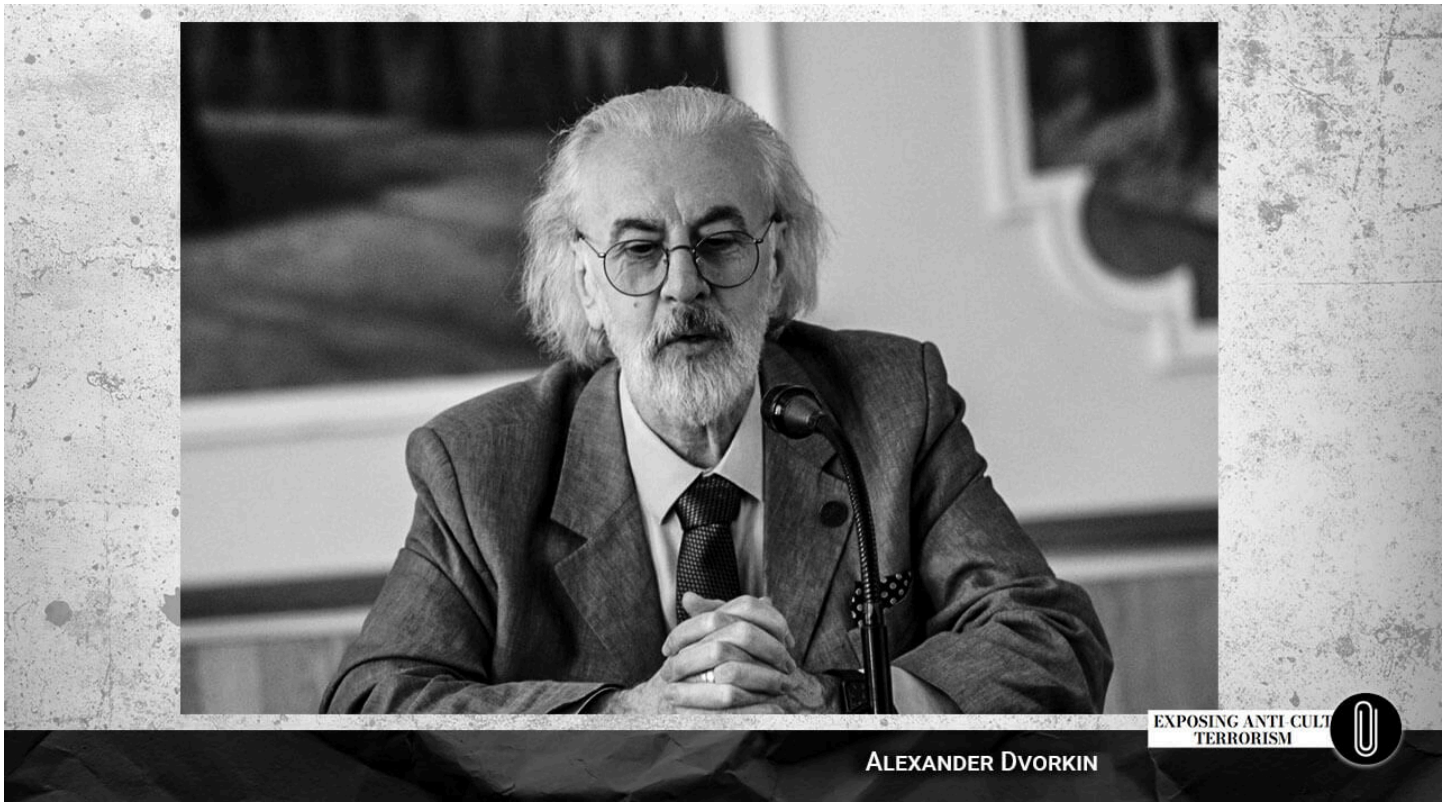
He further recalls the words of PSTBI rector, archpriest Vladimir Vorobyov:

"*I remember a completely horrifying episode when Father Vladimir, with a contorted face, said to me, referring to our brotherhood: 'You need to be beaten so that you cry and say: "Daddy, I won't do it anymore!" I replied, 'Father Vladimir, are you the daddy?' He didn't react, as if he hadn't heard, and a minute later switched to a more solemn tone: 'Mother Church calls: stop your outrages!' I said, 'Father Vladimir, so are you the mother too?' Again, there was no reaction, as if he didn't understand what he was saying, and like a tape recorder, he was set to one thing...*" [8]

On the website of the Irenaeus of Lyons Center, there is a section with articles about priest Georgy Kochetkov, featuring interesting quotes by Dvorkin:

"*The teachings and practices of Kochetkov were thoroughly analyzed in the digest published by PSTBI titled 'The Judgment For Them Has Long Been Prepared.' I won't repeat the entire analysis here, but will limit myself to quoting my brief note from my Telegram channel.*" [9]

This collection of articles published by PSTBI is dedicated to the doctrine and pastoral practice of priest Georgy Kochetkov and includes an analysis of three recently published books by Father Georgy, as well as a number of his sermons.



Dvorkin continues:

"*For me, reasons behind the unquestioned guru status and unwavering authority of priest Georgy Kochetkov among his followers have always been a mystery. This man who is completely unlike a charismatic leader, with a motionless face devoid of expression and a monotonous, colorless voice, seems incapable of evoking fa cal loyalty and blind devotion that are characteristic of the members of his movement.*"

"*Let's imagine that someone knows no foreign languages, is completely devoid of linguistic sensitivity and taste, writes his articles in a nightmarish bureaucratic style, and his long sermons and speeches are invariably tedious, vague, and dull.*" [9]

It may seem irrelevant to discuss Kochetkov's appearance. However, Dvorkin's tendency to resort to personal attacks, subjective characteristics, and ad hominem arguments to belittle his opponents and their followers is a common practice for him. This is Dvorkin's strategy: to "prove" to the followers that they made the "wrong" choice by selecting Georgy Kochetkov as their priest.

Next, Dvorkin employs his favorite method of "guilt by association":

"*Back in 1994, I delivered a report titled 'Spiritual Elitism as One of the Pathways to Sectarianism.' Although it was dedicated to a different subject, but nonetheless, exactly this characterization perfectly fits the structure created by priest Georgy Kochetkov.*" [9]

As we mentioned earlier, the "Unity of the Church" conference took place in 1994, where two priests, Georgy Kochetkov and Alexander Borisov, were condemned. Dvorkin delivered a report focused solely on one of Alexander Borisov's books, "The Whitened Harvest," and expressed his bewilderment at Borisov's assertion that all religions are equal and that no single religion possesses the fullness of truth. Instead, all religions hold only parts of this one truth.

"*One of God's hidden designs, allowing for the division of Christians, lies in the fact that truth cannot be contained within one church… An absolute certainty that only 'our' church, only 'our' denomination has a monopoly on possessing the truth is a legacy of past centuries…*" [10]

"Nets of Renovated Orthodoxy"

Between 1995 and 1997, a major campaign against Father Georgy and the Brotherhood began in the press and on television, forming an image of the "enemy of the people."

Annual digests were published, entirely or partially dedicated to condemning Father Georgy's activities, filled with gross distortions and slander. [8]

- 1995: Nets of Renovated Orthodoxy. Moscow: Russian Herald, 1995.
- 1996: Antichrist in Moscow. Issue 2. Moscow, 1996.
- 1996: Modern Renovationism: Protestantism of the "Eastern Rite." Moscow: Odigitria, 1996.
- 1997: School of Church Turmoil. Moscow: Sretensky Stavropegic Men's Monastery, 1997.

The campaign was supported by numerous television and radio broadcasts, as well as articles in Radonezh, Russkiy Vestnik, and other media outlets. According to those articles, the threat of "neo-renovationism" started looming over the church, concentrated in the Moscow parishes of priests Georgy Kochetkov and Alexander Borisov, where "individuals of Jewish nationality" have been spotted, along with "chummy relationships" with the priests, "agape meals replacing the Eucharist," "dual spiritual lives," "generous communion for Catholics and Protestants," and "meetings characteristic of sectarians of various kinds." Readers were led to believe that a "parallel structure" was being created within the church and that dogmatic foundations were being distorted.

Criminal Provocation

In 1997, a second priest, 28-year-old Mikhail Dubovitsky, a graduate of Kursk Seminary, was appointed to the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Pechatniki where Father Georgy was the rector. On his very first day, while conducting his inaugural priestly service, Dubovitsky expressed dissatisfaction with the liturgy and reported that he had been sent to correct "deficiencies in the pastoral, liturgical, and other aspects of parish life." He did not disclose who sent him, but he regularly visited the Sretensky Monastery. Let's recall that the Cathedral of Presentation was precisely located within the Sretensky Monastery, and this cathedral had been taken from Father Kochetkov and his Brotherhood.

On June 29, 1997, Father Mikhail staged an act of violence against himself during a church service after rehearsing it in the altar and sacristy the evening before. [7] However, there were many witnesses to Dubovitsky's aberrant behavior, including a police officer. The arriving doctor noted signs of acute mental disturbance and decided on the involuntary hospitalization of priest Mikhail Dubovitsky due to his social danger. Dubovitsky was referred to a psychiatric assessment. As a result, it was impossible to initiate a criminal case against Kochetkov for the alleged beating of Dubovitsky. However, Father Georgy was dismissed from his position as rector of the church due to this incident, without any investigation.

июль -97

Ежемесячное приложение к «Независимой газете» №7, июль 1997 г.

Вести

БПЦ провозглашает независимость от государства

На Соборе Болгарской Православной Церкви (БПЦ), прошедшем в начале июля в Софии под председательством Патриарха Максима, провозглашена независимость Церкви от государства.

На Соборе БПЦ, созванном впервые за последние 44 года, было решено отныне устраивать подобные соборы каждые четыре года. Собор официально заявил, что БПЦ отказывается выполнять введенные при коммунистическом режиме правила, в соответствии с которыми кандидатура новоизбранного патриарха должна утверждаться правительством.

Собор проходит в тяжелые для БПЦ условия: раскол, произошедший в 1992 г., когда часть клириков и мирян отказалась подчиняться Патриарху Максиму, обвинив его в сотрудничестве с коммунистами, углубляется. Новое правительство Болгарии оказывает явное предпочтение альтернативному синоду во главе с бывшим митрополитом Черноморским Пименом, который в прошлом году на так называемом церковно-народном соборе был избран патриархом.

Американские церкви обвиняют Верховный суд в узурпации власти

В День независимости США ведущие церковные лидеры этой страны выступили с совместным заявлением, в котором говорится, что «конституционный порядок в США – в состоянии кризиса». Причиной для такого заявления послужил ряд решений Верховного суда, затрагивающих сферу морали, в частности по проблеме абортов.

Авторы заявления – представители различных христианских конфессий – обвиняют Верховный суд в «узурпации власти», «попытке

КРУПНЕЙШИЙ МОСКОВСКИЙ ПРИХОД ОСТАЕТСЯ БЕЗ ЛЮБИМОГО НАСТОЯТЕЛЯ

КОНФЛИКТ В ХРАМЕ УСПЕНИЯ БОЖИЕЙ МАТЕРИ В ПЕЧАТНИКАХ МОЖЕТ ИМЕТЬ ДАЛЕКО ИДУЩИЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ДЛЯ РПЦ

Участники конфликта в храме Успения Божией Матери в Печатниках: священники Георгий Кочетков (слева) и Михаил Дубовицкий.

Фото Андрея Николаевского и Артема Житенева (ИТ-фото)

"The largest Moscow parish is left without its beloved rector": headline in Nezavisimaya Gazeta ("Independent Newspaper"), July 1997 (photo sourced from ogkochetkov.ru)

This entire provocation was necessary for Father Tikhon Shevkunov to obtain a document from the police stating that a fight had occurred, along with a report of

Father Mikhail's visit to the trauma center, which would document the "injuries."

Simultaneously with these events, an intensive ideological campaign began on Radio Radonezh, supported by a television program "Russian House." The author and host of "Russian House" and the editor-in-chief of the similarly-named magazine was Alexander Krutov. Among members of the editorial board were igumen Tikhon Shevkunov and a retired KGB lieutenant general Nikolai Leonov who had previously been the deputy head of the First Main Directorate of State Security, where Vladimir Putin served. [5]

"*A parallel totalitarian entity is being created within the Russian Orthodox Church, based on the denial of everything that constitutes the Russian Orthodoxy. This entity is not only being created; it has already been established and is currently working to destroy and lead into delusion those who, unfortunately, have allowed themselves to be deceived... This Carthage of lies must be destroyed!*"

"This Carthage of lies must be destroyed!" declared Igumen Tikhon Shevkunov on the air of Radio Radonezh. [11]

The live broadcast on Radio Radonezh also involved speakers such as archpriest Vladimir Divakov, archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, archpriest Valentin Asmus, and deacon Andrey Kuraev. The slander was supported by the wide dissemination of the film "Exposure" fabricated based on video records of those events. Surprisingly, the video footage was actually submitted by the Transfiguration Brotherhood to the Patriarchate to prove their innocence. However, the opponents twisted everything inside out.

For many years, the film was disseminated on the Internet and through church shops, and collective viewings were organized in many dioceses, even abroad, as well as in spiritual educational institutions. For many years, no one was admitted into the Moscow clergy without evidence of an unequivocally negative attitude towards Father Georgy and his activities.

As a result of such harassment, by the Patriarch's order, priest Georgy Kochetkov was dismissed from his position as rector of the church and banned from serving. Additionally, 12 active parishioners were excommunicated from communion.

Nikita Struve, editor-in-chief of the magazine "Herald of the Russian Christian Movement (RCM)" where Georgy Kochetkov had been publishing under the pseudonym Bogdanov since 1983, stated:

"*Our disagreements with the Patriarch began due to the indefinite (!) ban imposed on Father Georgy Kochetkov and his twelve colleagues without any substantial reason. By that time, the environment around the Patriarch had noticeably changed for the worse (the most honest Boris Borisovich Vik had been removed). I asked the Patriarch what Father Georgy had done wrong, but he only replied, 'He is prideful.' I said, 'In that case, many should be banned, starting with your visitor.' A year later, as the ban continued, I raised the issue again during another visit, pleading for the ban to be lifted. In my fervor, I even said, 'I'm ready to kneel before you…' At that, the Patriarch perked up and jumped from his chair, begging me not to do that. But as we parted, he still said, 'Please, come to see me again.' However, that visit was destined to be the last*." [7]

Priest Georgy Kochetkov on the day the ban was lifted. March 15, 2000 (photo sourced from ogkochetkov.ru)

The ban was lifted after two and a half years. However, the persecution didn't end.

In an article in Nezavisimaya Gazeta, dated August 8, 1997, the story of the staged beating of Father Mikhail Dubovitsky was examined in detail, but let's focus on the conclusion:

"*...Orthodox fundamentalism that has been gaining strength in the church recently is both a church and a social phenomenon, as its main goal is the struggle for power not only within the church, but also in society. What once seemed like a humorous masquerade — parades of Cossacks, Black Hundred members, etc. — now poses a real threat to peace and freedom in society. After liberation from the communist system, it's important for all of us to consider how to avoid falling under the control of another system tomorrow.*" [12]

Accusation of Heresy

Despite the lifted ban on serving, inquisitors from PSTBI (St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Institute) did not calm down. Less than two months after the ban had been lifted, Patriarch Alexy II issued an order to establish a "theological commission for doctrinal inquiries into priest Georgy Kochetkov." The commission consisted of six members, most of whom were professors at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Institute. Archpriest Sergey Pravdolyubov, also a professor at PSTBI, was appointed the commission chairman.

Simultaneously with the start of the commission's work, a digest titled "Judgment For Them Has Long Been Prepared," published by PSTBI, appeared in church shops. The digest subjected Father Georgy's catechesis and dissertation to pseudoscientific criticism. According to the commission's report, its work was based on conclusions of this digest and the "Notes on the Church" by archpriest John Meyendorff, the spiritual advisor of Alexander Dvorkin.

To reiterate, all the authors of the book "Judgment For Them Has Long Been Prepared" were PSTBI professors, and four of them were also members of the commission. That means, the commission was established not for investigation: its conclusions were predetermined even before its work began.

The digest authors accused Father Georgy of the following mutually exclusive heresies: Gnosticism, Nestorianism, the Phrygian heresy, and Monophysitism, also including Protestantism and atheism in this list. The commission's conclusion was submitted to the Patriarch for review and subsequently forwarded for consideration to the Synodal Theological Commission led by metropolitan Filaret Vakhromeev.

Tikhon Shevkunov and Patriarch Alexy II (photo sourced from blagogon.ru)

Upon reviewing the case, the Synodal Theological Commission found the conclusions of the first commission largely untenable.

"*...The Presidium concluded that there were errors in the works of priest Georgy Kochetkov; however, based on the responses and clarifications he provided, the Presidium is not inclined to believe that the deviations from Orthodox doctrine made by priest Georgy Kochetkov were intentional or that he was creating a coherent heretical system. His works consist of a set of vaguely formulated religious propositions and hypotheses. However, this doesn't absolve him of responsibility for what he has stated on the pages of his books.*" [13]

Metropolitan Filaret, chairman of the Synodal Theological Commission:

"*On our part, we have fulfilled the Patriarch's assignment. Perhaps, it would hav en more appropriate to refer this issue directly to the Synodal Theological Commission,*

as we have a broader perspective on this problem. The local Moscow group that dealt with this issue may have approached it with some bias; perhaps they lacked a broader outlook. But we corrected what we could, as best as we could…" [12]

Using modern information technologies, opponents created an image of Father Georgy as a heresiarch, that is, a founder or leader of a heretical teaching. When Father Georgy's name was mentioned in blogs and forums, anonymous users, as their responses, posted links to the unapproved opinion of the commission chaired by Father Sergey Pravdolyubov, to the forged film "Exposure," and to the website of the main ideologist of the entire anticult movement, Dvorkin. All of this constitutes elements of an information warfare strategy. Slander flooded the lines of search queries and was presented as if it were coming from the church.

Anonymous authors not just utilized the Internet, but even attempted to exert pressure on the Patriarch. An anonymous note was published on the "Russian Line" website, which was presented to the Patriarch at an episcopal assembly of the Moscow clergy. In this note, the anonymous author expressed outrage over why priest Georgy Kochetkov had not yet been banned from serving:

"*Honestly speaking, Father Georgy Kochetkov should not be congratulated but banned*." [14]

The note contains aggressive slander against Father Georgy Kochetkov. However, there was no response, as anonymous notes are not reviewed by the Patriarch. Nevertheless, it was addressed by archpriest Pavel Adelgeim:

"*The goodwill of the Patriarch, the congratulations from Metropolitan Juvenaly, Archbishop Hilarion, Bishop Seraphim, and Bishop Mercury, as well as the support from Orthodox hierarchs of both Western and Eastern churches, and numerous theologians and scholars, both Russian and foreign, who participated in the annual conferences of St. Philaret's Institute, testify to the high ecclesiastical and scholarly significance of his work*." [16]

Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyaev) and priest Georgy Kochetkov, 2007 (Mozgov / Chernykh. Original work)

Persecution in the dioceses across Russia

Alongside accusations of heresy, terms like “sectarians,” “totalitarian sect,” and “methods of mind control” were increasingly applied to the Transfiguration Brotherhood. [12] The author of these labels is Alexander Dvorkin, head of the first anticult organization in Russia, RACIRS, which, as previously mentioned in the first part of “Modern Inquisition Within the Russian Orthodox Church,” is the only organization that fits the definition of a totalitarian sect, with a single center and an international network of adherents within various government bodies.

RACIRS president Alexander Dvorkin, vice president — archpriest Alexander Novopashin, archpriest Alexander Shabanov, and responsible secretary — priest Lev Semenov (photo sourced from ansobor.ru)

For many years, Dvorkin, together with his staff, traveled to various dioceses, delivered lectures, wrote articles, and gave interviews, instilling fear and distrust toward the Transfiguration Brotherhood through repeatedly disseminated lies and propaganda reminiscent of Soviet-era tactics in both spirit and content.

The consistent formation of an enemy image led to harassment of the Brotherhood members in several dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church. One of the most high-profile incidents was the excommunication of Brotherhood members in Tver in early 2007. The reasons for excommunication included the "openly sectarian nature" of the Brotherhood and perception of "spiritual exclusivity" and "elitism" among its members. Two months later, the ban was lifted when the story gained widespread attention.

Nikita Struve, member of the diocesan council of the Western European Exarchate, stated:

"*This excommunication had a distressing impact on me, my wife, and everyone I encountered during those days. How could Bishop Viktor allow this? To excommunicate innocent children is incomprehensible; such a thing has never happened in the history of the Church. But to collectively excommunicate a hu ˈred adults who are guilty of no sin is madness, a loss of direction... This is not only*

uncanonical (an abuse of power), but simply blasphemous, contrary to all of Christ's teachings. His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod must work to annul this decision of the Tver diocesan council; otherwise, it will cast a heavy shadow on the entire Church." [12]

Those who attempted to speak out against the injustice and un-Christian nature of persecution of the Brotherhood and Father Georgy were labeled as "Kochetkovites." [12] Sometimes, even individuals with no connection to the Brotherhood were accused of "Kochetkovism," particularly those who were reluctant to make unfounded conclusions and support the general harassment. This effectively eliminated any sympathetic attitude toward the Brotherhood and provoked further persecution.

A campaign against the Transfiguration Brotherhood in Nizhnevartovsk began in 2010 with reprints in the local parish newsletter of materials from the "Holy Fire" website and slander from the pulpits. Comments started appearing on the parish website, containing threats of physical violence against Father Georgy Kochetkov and members of the Brotherhood.

In the fall of 2011, two members of the Brotherhood were dismissed from their positions at an Orthodox gymnasium. In February 2012, without any canonical grounds, parishioners of one of the churches in Nizhnevartovsk were denied communion, accused of having "connections" with the Transfiguration Brotherhood and of reading the Gospel jointly in their homes. Even children were briefly subjected to this ban. In response to an appeal from Brotherhood members, bishop Pavel Fokin of Khanty-Mansiysk and Surgut publicly accused them of heresy. It was only nine months later, after a direct directive from the Moscow Patriarchate, that the faithful were allowed to receive communion again; however, the reasons for the unlawful excommunication were never disclosed.

Alexander Dvorkin, who arrived in Nizhnevartovsk several months after the incident, once again voiced the accusations he himself had fabricated.

In 2012, excommunications began in Krasnousolsk, Republic of Bashkortostan. Parishioners were accused of not repenting for the "Kochetkov heresy" and of participating in agape meals (according to the priest, they were "drinking from a devilish cup"). The campaign received informational support from the "Ufa Diocesan Gazette" newspaper that reprinted the previously propagated slander.

In April 2013, Alexander Dvorkin traveled to Ufa on a "working visit," and a few weeks later, the "Ufa Diocesan Gazette" published a message from metropolitan Nikon of Ufa and Sterlitamak, which reiterated the previous set of accusations, claiming that members of the Transfiguration Brotherhood "prevent their children from baptism and communion," introduce the concept of "second-class Christians," and "create parallel entities." Priests who attempted to figure out the situation and act according to Christian conscience were transferred to the remotest parishes of the diocese.

In October 2014, even children were denied communion, despite protests from parishioners and tears of the children and their mothers. A week later, children were allowed to receive communion again, but adults have not been permitted to do so to this day.

Oasis of Brotherly Life

A parish of Father Ioann Privalov in the village of Zaostrovye in Arkhangelsk region became one of the largest oases of brotherly life in Russia. In 2010, a new ruling bishop, Daniil Dorovskikh, was appointed to the Arkhangelsk diocese.

Two years later, information warfare began against Father Ioann Privalov and members of the Transfiguration Brotherhood, aimed at destroying the parish. Within a short time, numerous publications with various accusations appeared on the websites of "Russian National Line," the "Holy Fire," "Anti-Modernism," pravoslavie.ru (the website of Igumen Tikhon Shevkunov), "Orthodoxy in the Northern Land," and the websites of Arkhangelsk and Ufa dioceses.

The campaign received informational support from Alexander Dvorkin, protodeacon Andrey Kuraev, archpriest Dmitry Smirnov, archpriest Vladimir Vigilansky, Olesya Nikolaeva, and other long-time persecutors of the Brotherhood.

In his defamatory articles, Dvorkin also pointed out that when Alexander Korelov, chairman of the Legal Committee of RACIRS, visited Arkhangelsk, one of local bloggers, loyal to the "Kochetkovites," wrote an open letter to the director of Dobrolyubov Library, requesting a ban on the public lecture by the cult expert. Ten people signed the letter: six labeled as "Kochetkovites" and four Scientologists. "An interesting alliance," summarized the anticultist. [16]

Metropolitan Daniil described the "difficult" situation in the Zaostrovye parish as follows:

"*First of all, when speaking about the Zaostrovye parish, it should be noted th for many years it lived a normal church life, including several decades after the Great*

Patriotic War, until a new priest, Father Ioann Privalov, was appointed there in the early 1990s. With his arrival, numerous changes began, which caused misunderstanding and indignation among local residents." [17]

Dvorkin also commented on a message that followers of Father Georgy Kochetkov were actively signing a petition to the Russian Minister of Justice Konovalov, requesting that Dvorkin be excluded from the ministry's expert council. They published this letter on their official resources.

"*I believe that the petition initiators were Scientologists with neo-Pentecostals, and the Kochetkovites supported their initiative. This support is very characteristic; in this case, it is appropriate to say that a guilty mind is never at ease. What difference does it make to the Kochetkovites whether I'm in the Expert Council or not? The fact that they showed such interest and even collaborated with Scientologists... This is a kind of taboo: there are different organizations and different views, but the fact that one cannot have anything to do with Scientologists is something that even a five-year-old child knows now, I think. The fact that the community of priest Georgy Kochetkov allows itself such cooperation shows its 'quality level,'" noted the anticultist*." [16]

In January 2013, missionary protodeacon Andrey Kuraev delivered spiritual and educational lectures in Arkhangelsk and Severodvinsk. "They smell like a totalitarian sect," the protodeacon remarked about members of the Brotherhood in his lecture "God is Love." [18] Father Ioann Privalov and his parishioners, among whom were many members of small Orthodox brotherhoods from Arkhangelsk region, faced a massive attack from Orthodox fundamentalists. [19]

Parishioners and Moscow intelligentsia stood up for Ioann Privalov (on the right)

Many prominent cultural figures spoke out in defense of the honor and dignity of the priest who had created a unique center for dialogue between the Church and society in the Russian North. Among them were Natalia Solzhenitsyna, Sergey Yursky, ita Struve, Olga Sedakova, Anna Shmaina-Velikanova, and Alexander Arkhangelsky.

However, this did not help. Under pressure from fundamentalist publications and ultraright activists, the diocesan council made a “staff” decision. At the diocesan council, Father Ioann was dismissed from his position as rector. The priest and his parishioners were labeled as schismatics and sectarians. The “accusations” were reinforced by false testimonies from five ex-parishioners who held personal grievances against the rector. [19] Involving apostates is a common tactic employed by anticultists in their game.

Parishioners and Moscow intelligentsia stood up for Ioann Privalov (on the right)

Zaostrovye Parish

Here is another statement by metropolitan Daniil regarding Father Ioann and members of his Brotherhood:

"*All heresies and schisms began with rejection of the vertical hierarchy. A priest is an authority for parishioners if he's in the right stance; for a priest, such authority is a bishop; for the bishop, it is the Patriarch and the Holy Synod. A person can only leave obedience to the Church if it professes heresy*." [17]

After all the targeted persecution, Priest Ioann Privalov became disabled.

"*...The priest, who experienced severe stress in January due to the misfortunes that befell him, spent many months not only on continuous sick leave, but also ended up in the hospital five times, where he underwent two surgeries*." [19]

Consequently, the church that in recent years had been gathering up to two hundred people for Sunday and holiday services became empty.

Not the entire church is sick

Here, we'd like to present the full text of an open letter from igumen Peter (Meshcherinov), a monk of Danilov Monastery in Moscow, published in KIFA, No. 12(86), September 2008.

Igumen Peter (Valentin Meshcherinov). Photo sourced from Wikipedia

"Controversial issues in the Church should be resolved through open discussion in the spirit of Christ's love"

"*In 1994, letters addressed to the Priesthood of our Church circulated through the churches and monasteries of Moscow, calling for the punishment of two Moscow priests — Father Georgy*

Kochetkov and Father Alexander Borisov. At that time, as a neophyte caught up in the general 'wave' of sentiment, I signed those letters. For many years now, I have regretted and repented of that action. I had the opportunity to personally apologize to Father Alexander Borisov, and I now offer my belated apology to Father Georgy Kochetkov on these pages. With this note, I publicly declare that I withdraw my signature from the aforementioned letters.

At the same time, I find it necessary to say that I still disagree with some of Father Georgy's theoretical views as well as certain practical methods of his catechetical work. However, the years that have passed have convinced me that controversial issues in the Church should be resolved collectively and ethically — through open discussion in the spirit of Christ's love, rather than through denunciations. The proper response to activities that some may find unacceptable should be positive actions, rather than silencing problems and submitting stealthy letters." [20]

Hierarchy, But of What Kind?

We do not consider Wikipedia to be an authoritative source of information, yet millions of people around the world turn to it to form an initial understanding of a person, event, scientific concept, or historical phenomenon. It's a familiar and relatively convenient resource. In search engines, this website appears among the top results. Often, people do not go beyond this source in their research, accepting its information as the "ultimate truth."

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The current version of this page has not yet been reviewed by experienced contributors and may differ significantly from the version last reviewed on November 4, 2024 ; 7 edits require review .
Wikipedia has articles about other people with the surname Kochetkov .
Georgy (Yuri) Serafimovich Kochetkov (born October 5, 1950 , Moscow) is a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church , author of books and articles on theological topics, creator of his own system of catechesis , founder and rector of the St. Philaret Orthodox Christian Institute (1988-2020), founder and spiritual trustee of the Transfiguration Fellowship of Small Orthodox Brotherhoods (since 1990), translator of the main texts of Orthodox worship from Greek and Church Slavonic into church Russian .
As early as the 1970s, as a layman, he began to develop his own system of helping people prepare to join the Church. He defended the need to develop community life, advocated for the creation and development of Orthodox brotherhoods, which he began to create together with his supporters. In 1983, he was ordained a deacon, and in 1989, a priest. His activities began to be subjected to harsh criticism, the peak of which occurred in the 1990s - early 2000s. His main opponents were the sectologist Alexander Dvorkin , Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov) , Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov , the editor-in-chief of the radio station "Radonezh" Evgeny Nikiforov , as well as a number of publicists who united around the magazine " Blessed Fire ". Criticism was provoked by the worship service in Russian, the practice of weekly Communion, and agape . Critics also found heretical views in his theological writings.
Georgy Serafimovich Kochetkov
Date of birth October 5, 1950 (74 years old)

Georgy Kochetkov

This priority position, along with the obvious shortcomings in the administration of this online resource, has not gone unnoticed by anticultists. It was detailed in an article "Who is Tempus? Anticultism on Wikipedia Pages."

• (current | prev.) 07:49, 28 June 2014 Tempus (discussion | contribution) . . (31,565 bytes) (+25) . . (→Biography) (cancel) [patrolled by member Igor Fedenko]
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• (current | prev.) 07:11, 28 June 2014 Tempus (discussion | contribution) . . (28,376 bytes) (+1401) . . (→Notes) (cancel)
• (current | prev.) 07:10, 28 June 2014 Tempus (discussion | contribution) . . (26,975 bytes) (-3080) . . (→Links: [[VP::NON-CATALOG]]) (cancel)

To illustrate the manipulations of anticultists, here's the concluding paragraph from the Wikipedia article about Georgy Kochetkov:

Current situation [edit | edit code]

Today, Father Georgy Kochetkov is an active priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. On August 23, 2015, on the day of the 25th anniversary of the Transfiguration Brotherhood [27] , with the blessing of Patriarch Kirill, Father Georgy Kochetkov served in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow [28] . During the service, he delivered a sermon on the Sunday Gospel reading [29] . Nevertheless, according to sectologist Alexander Dvorkin, the teachings and practices of Priest Georgy Kochetkov fall into the category of “Distortion of Orthodoxy and near-Orthodox sects” [30] .

Today, Father Georgy Kochetkov is an active priest of the Russian Orthodox Church. On August 23, 2015, the day of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Transfiguration Brotherhood, with the blessing of Patriarch Kirill, Father Georgy Kochetkov served in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. During the church service, he delivered a sermon on the Sunday Gospel reading. Nevertheless, according to sectologist Alexander Dvorkin, the teaching and practice of Priest Georgy Kochetkov fall into the category of “Distortion of Orthodoxy and pseudo-Orthodox sects.”

It turns out to be quite comical: although Patriarch Kirill himself is presented in opposition to Dvorkin, anticultists still strive to have the final word. One can’t help but wonder: who then is the main authority in the church if even its head is not an authority for them?

To be continued…

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Alexander Dvorkin anticultist Dmitry Smirnov Evgeny Nikiforov Patriarch Kirill RACIRS Russian Orthodox Church tempus Tikhon Shevkunov Vladimir Putin

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